

USDA/Rural Development

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES \$15 MILLION FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION DIGITAL TRANSITION GRANTS

Washington, July 21, 2003 —Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announces a new grant program to finance the conversion of television services to digital broadcasting for small rural public television stations. The Federal Communications Commission mandated that public television be converted to digital broadcasting by May 1, 2003. Almost half of the nation's 357 public television stations did not meet the deadline.

"The Bush Administration is committed to helping communities improve their technology infrastructure," said Veneman. "These grants will assist the most rural, isolated communities to have access to public broadcasting in this digital age."

"Many rural communities depend on public television stations for services ranging from educational course content in their schools to local news, weather, and agricultural reports. This grant is essential for connecting Texas rural areas to the mainstream," said Bryan Daniel, Texas State Director for USDA Rural Development.

To meet the requirements for this competitive grant program, a station must install a new antenna, transmitter or translator, and new digital program management facilities consisting of processing and storage systems. If a station is to perform a program origination, which many do, digital cameras, editing and mastering systems are required. Applications will be scored on the rural nature of the area served, the relative average earnings of the population in the applicant's service area, and the critical need the communities have for the broadcast services rendered.

The Notice of Funds Availability was published in the July 18, 2003, Federal Register. The deadline will be September 16, 2003. Grants will be limited to a maximum of \$2 million for an individual station, or if it is an application representing a group of stations, the first will be limited to \$2 million and the others to \$1 million each.

Funds are provided from the USDA Rural Development Telecommunications Program. USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

For more information on USDA Rural Development programs in Texas, check our web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/tx/>.

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